



# Implementation of a Better Block

Norview Task Force Meeting  
January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2014

# What is Better Block?



- Team Better Block works with cities, developers, and stakeholders to create quick, inexpensive, high-impact changes that improve and revitalize underused properties and highlight the potential for creating great “Complete Streets”.

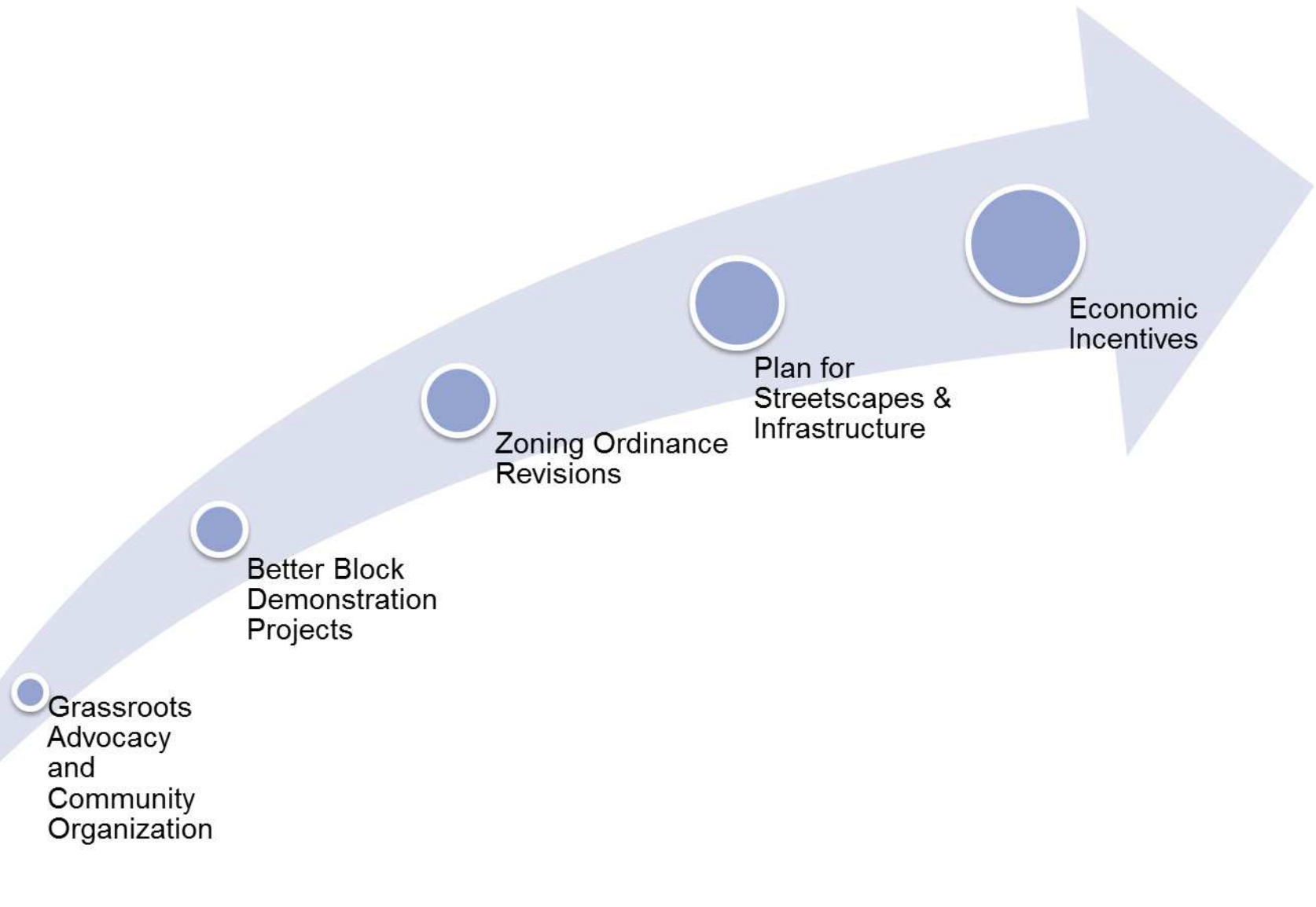




# Why a Better Block?

- Community-Driven Revitalization Project
  - Pop Up Retail Opportunities
  - Infrastructure Changes
    - Parklets
    - Additional Crosswalks
- Outcomes
  - Implementation of PCO Zoning Changes
    - New land uses
    - Change in development standards
  - Streetscape changes

# Steps to Implementation



# Norfolk Better Block Events

- Arts District Better Block

- April 12-13, 2013
- Theme: Artistic Expression and Enterprise



- 35<sup>th</sup> Street “Soul of Norfolk Better Block

- October 8-9, 2013
- Theme: Showcase of the city’s diverse small businesses



# Downtown Arts & Design District

---

- The implementation of the project was the result of stakeholders over several months
  - Property owners
  - Business owners
  - Interested citizens
  - Downtown Norfolk Council
- All recommendations represent a consensus opinion

# Zoning Ordinance Revisions: Arts District

---

## ■ Uses added

- Antique Store
- Arts Studio
- Automobile and Truck Repair
- Brewery/Cidery/Distillery/Winery
- Consignment Shop
- Convenience Store
- Convenience Store with fuel sales
- Dance Studio
- Educational Facility, College/University
- Flea Market, Indoor
- Government Operations
- Passenger Terminal, Bus
- Used Books/Media

## ■ Uses deleted

- After Hours Membership Organization
- Commercial Drive-Through



# Urban Design Associates Infrastructure Plan





# 35<sup>th</sup> Street Better Block: Implementation

- Implementation of the demonstration project was the result of key stakeholders:
  - Park Place Business Association
  - Park Place Civic League
  - All property owners and business owners



# Zoning Ordinance Revisions:

## 35<sup>th</sup> Street

- 35<sup>th</sup> Street Pedestrian Commercial Overlay District Changes
  - Additional uses for commercial properties to reflect market demand within the area
  - Modify development standards and waivers
  - Modify PCO Development Certificate requirement to streamline the approval process for new development within the zoning district.



# Infrastructure: 35<sup>th</sup> Street

- Demonstration project as test for changes
  - Traffic calming techniques:
    - Avg Speed prior: 25 MPH
    - Better Block: 12 MPH
  - Enhance opportunities for multi-modal movement
  - Create invitations for people to live/work in the area.



# Going Forward: Five Points

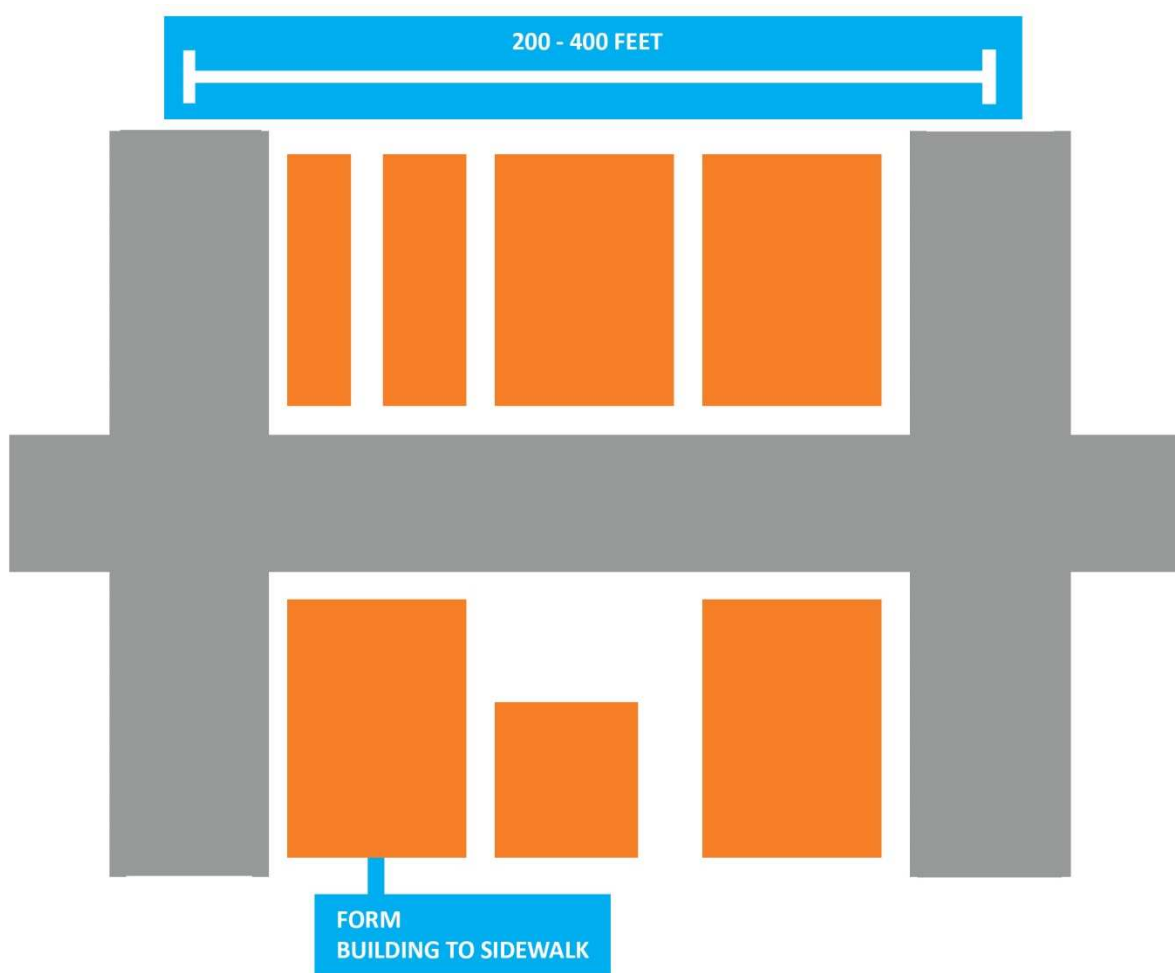




## Build A Better Block Guide

### 1. Define project

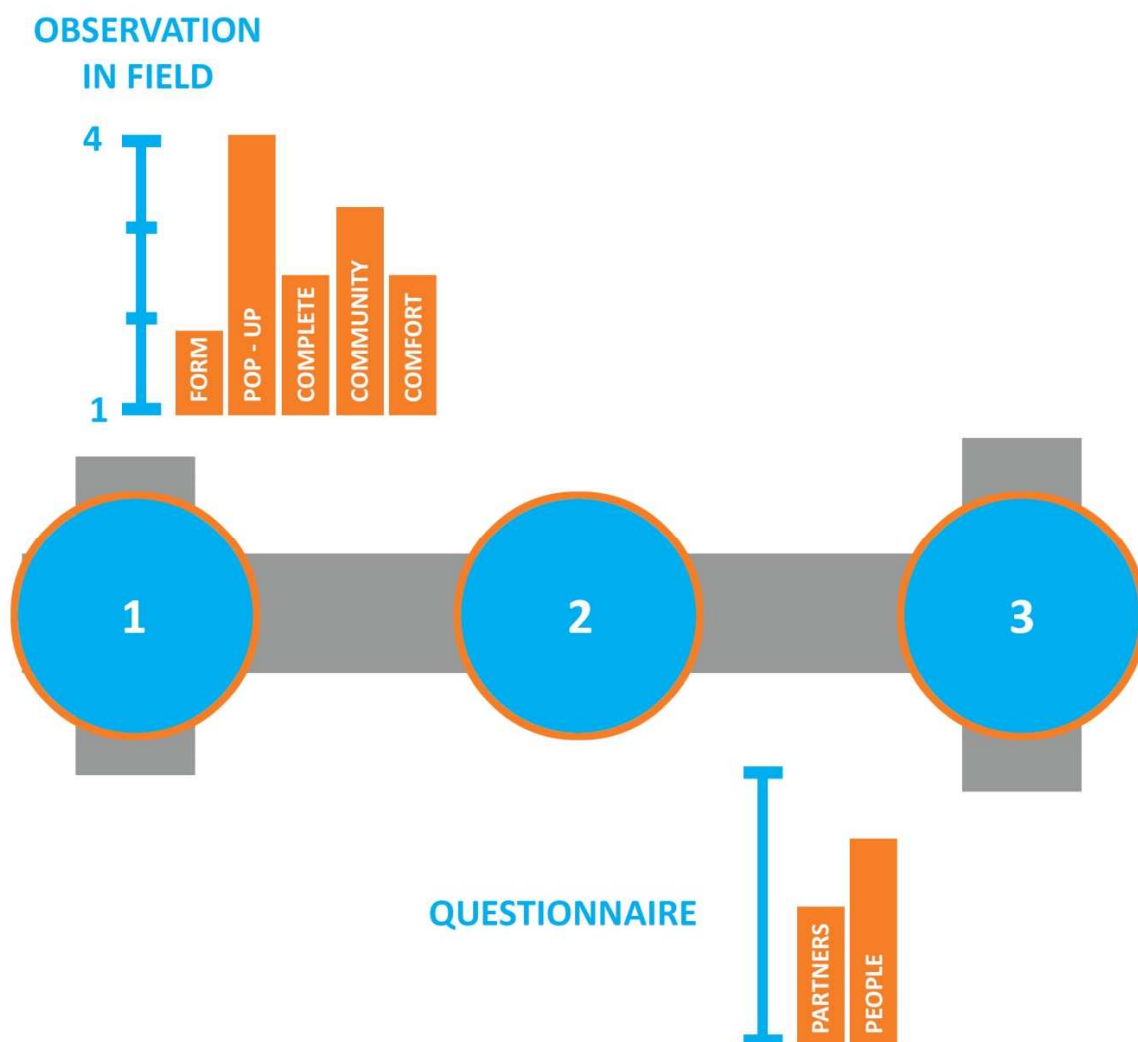
Within your project area or corridor use the Better Block Survey in Appendix A to define a project location. Contain the project to a block length between 200 and 400 feet. Score elements 1 to 5 using a field visit. Rank several potential locations, give them a name/number and then examine potential community partnerships with a public meeting.





## 2. Public Meeting

Introduce the Better Block approach at a public meeting, present the potential locations and seek input from citizens and business owners to determine the final selection. Use the questionnaire in Appendix B to solidify community support and partnerships and complete scoring elements 6 and 7 on the Better Block Survey Appendix A. Rank the potential blocks and move forward with the highest ranked location.





### 3. Community Walk

Upon selecting a Better Block location, set-up a time to walk the block with the community and create Better Block Teams. Use appendix C as a sign-in sheet and discuss opportunities for participation. Conclude the walk with a brainstorming session of existing community assets and people that can be activated during the Better Block. Don't overthink the details. The majority of the work and details are worked out in the week prior to the Better Block. Once you set a date (at least 60 days out), begin promoting and advertising the project.



Community walk during Saint Paul Better Block identified opportunities for complete streets, public art and pop-up businesses.

### 4. Design and Permit

At least 60 days prior to the target date, begin the special event permit process. The City of Norfolk has a checklist that must be followed and an in-person meeting is needed to clarify event details. Begin with defining the focal points of the Better Block and establishing the walking and biking connections. Make these connections safe and appealing using as many of the techniques found in the street design manual. Create a concept plan and work with a traffic control contractor to provide safety cones and warning signs for the day of. See Appendix D for examples of both.

### 5. Team Coordination and Needs List

45 days prior to the Better Block create a needs list of items to borrow for the concept plan to be a reality, such as chairs, tables, landscaping and pallet wood for building. Ask for each team to designate a lead person and have them organize their needs list and share with the greater group.

### 6. Prebuild

Work with property owners to gain access to vacant buildings for pop-up shops. Walk through the pop-up shops with building inspection and fire chief to check for hazards and define mitigation measures in the short term. If no buildings are available, then position market stalls in-front of buildings or in a central plaza. Gather volunteers for a prebuild session one to two weeks prior to the event. Secure access to the vacant buildings to paint and clean-up pop-up shops, build street furniture and clean up



Building the Better Block with the community is key to success.



## Build A Better Block Guide

public spaces.

### 7. Procure Materials

Borrow and build as much of the Better Block as you can. Set a small budget for buying duct tape, spray chalk and other essentials for creating bike lanes and cross walks. Use white duct tape to simulate bike lanes and crosswalks. Retailers will often offer discounts for community projects; just ask.

### 8. Setup and Take Down

Build into your special event permit two hours for set-up and take down each. Do street treatments during low use times, like earlier in the morning. Allow vendors access at least one hour prior to opening. Hold some volunteers for take-down so that you have a fresh team at the end of the day.



Set-up for better block in Saint Paul with twenty volunteers took two hours.

### 9. Document

Assign volunteers to photograph video and document the Better Block before and during the event. Use Appendix E as a go by for performance measures.



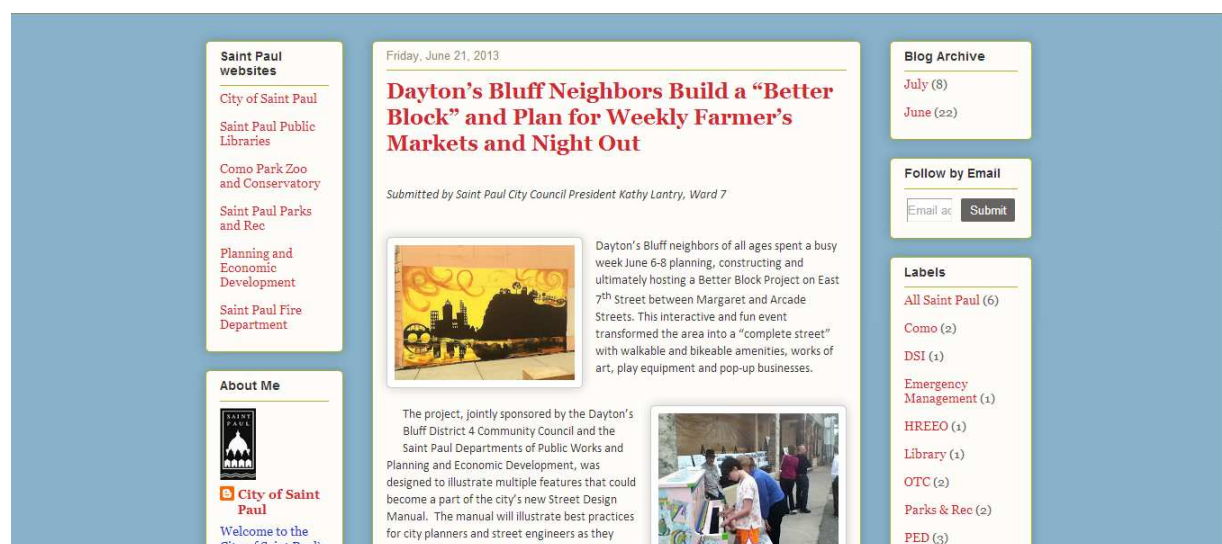




## Build A Better Block Guide

### 10. Follow-Up

Use surveys in Appendix F to follow up with volunteers, participants and attendees. Publish findings of the project in print and on-line.



Use blogs and on-line media to share the story of the Better Block.

### Conclusion

Better Blocks have been used in various stages of project delivery, but are most often used prior to final alternative analysis. Use the findings and momentum realized during the Better Block to create a final design that is both challenging, yet achievable. The creativity of generalist (citizens, moms, kids, artist and regular Joes) will improve the design and enliven the street design process, while supporting the professional designer/engineer/planner's responsibilities.



## Build A Better Block Guide

### Appendix A Better Block Survey

#### BETTER BLOCK SURVEY

Element	Rate 1 to 4 (1 being poor, 4 being strong)	Photo	Recommendation for Better Block
1. Building edges that define space (form)			
2. Leasable/Available buildings which present opportunities for temporary business development (pop-up)			
3. Potential for multi-modal street infrastructure, available capacity, (complete)			
4. Proximity to a neighborhood (community)			
5. Placemaking potential (comfort)			
6. Interest from local partners, existing organizations (partners)			
7. Existing Special Events (people)			

**Overall Rating:** \_\_\_\_ out of 28



## Build A Better Block Guide

### Appendix B Questionnaire

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Block \_\_\_\_\_

Vision for the area

---

---

---

The Better Block typically takes 3 months of planning and execution. Which months in 2013 are best for you and what is your target date for the project? \_\_\_\_\_

How much time per week can you dedicate to the Better Block? How many people/organizations do you have contacts for that could assist in this project? \_\_\_\_\_

How many property owners do you have contact with and feel relatively certain of gaining access to vacant storefronts? \_\_\_\_\_

Who do you have in mind for leading elements of the Better Block?

Street team \_\_\_\_\_

Pop-Up Business team \_\_\_\_\_

Marketing/Programming team \_\_\_\_\_

Are you willing to file for an event permit from the City and attend meetings to reach agreement on event plan? YES / NO

Are you willing to solicit borrowing materials, such as landscaping, for the project from area businesses?  
YES / NO

Thank you for your time!





## Build A Better Block Guide

### Appendix C Team Assignments

**Street Team:** Focus on complete street, right sizing, bicycle and pedestrian amenities for the block. Learn how to talk to engineers and win. We will transform the street into a two lane main street with small park spaces, bike lanes, cross-walks, cafes and lighting. Volunteer needs; you may specify more than one task to accomplish:

- 1- Designer, ability to work with CADD and/or photoshop
- 10- Streetscape doer, the ability to lift 50 pounds is a must for street re-invention. You will get a hands-on education in street improvements from collecting, mobilizing to installing cross walks, lighting, planters and café furniture. You will learn how their placement influences placemaking and effects business.
- 5 Landscape doer, We borrow and we borrow well. We will need to acquire plants from local nurseries to use for the day, place them and keep them alive!

20 spaces available


**Pop-Up Team:** Always wanted to start that small business or have a friend or family member that talks about the flower shop they always wanted to own? This is the time to try it out! We will have a crowd of folks wanting to see the better block and they will bring a wallet. We have access to five great vacant shops and we want to fill them with: Flower shop, coffee shop, book store, music house, gift shop, you name it! Bring your ideas. 20 people needed.


**Marketing and Documentation:** We need to get people to the better block to show them what a revitalized main street is and we need to document the event well to spread the news later.

Number cruncher, nothing is worth doing unless you measure it! Speed study, pedestrian and bicycle counts and other livability indicators will be tracked before and during the better block.

Outreach Manager

2 Photographers and videographers



Build A Better Block Guide

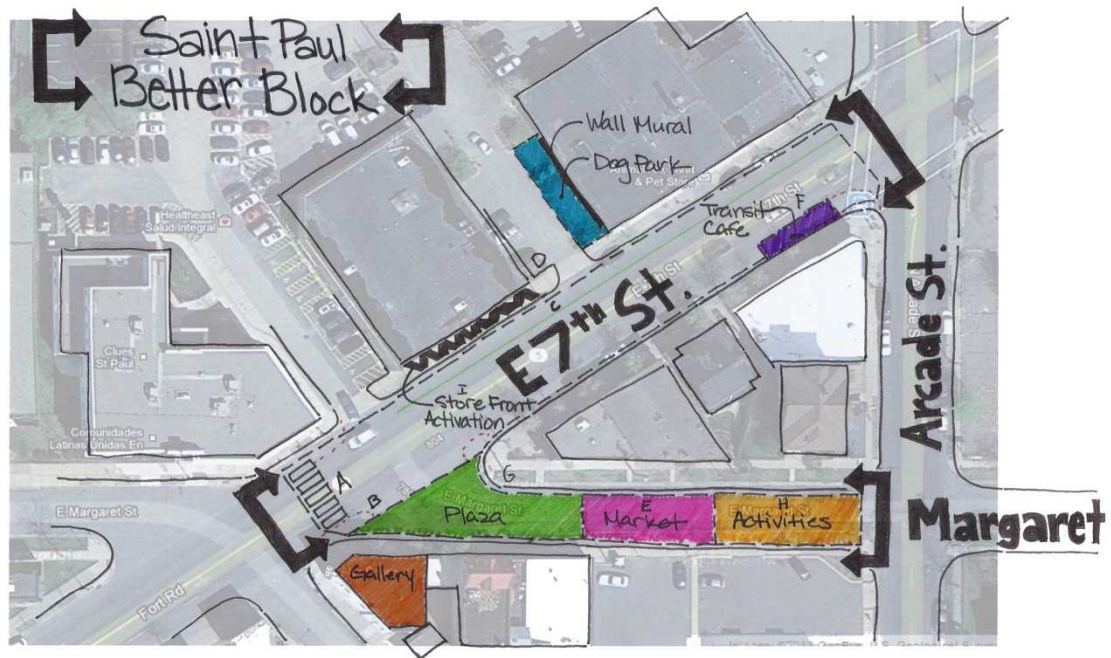
- I web manager
- I copy editor
- I Reporter/writer

6 spaces available


**Signage and Wayfinding:** What am I looking at and where do I go? We need folks that have graphic capabilities to create signage and wayfinding for the better block and the surrounding community.

4 Graphics, production and installation

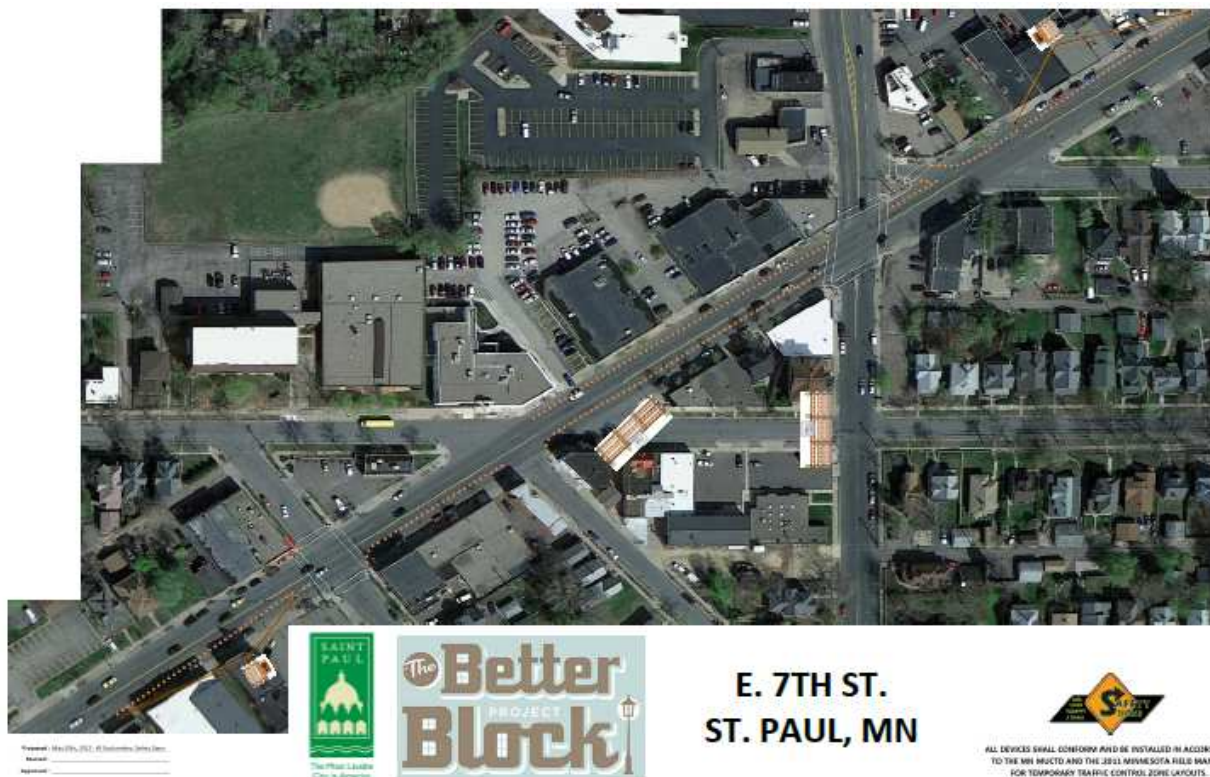
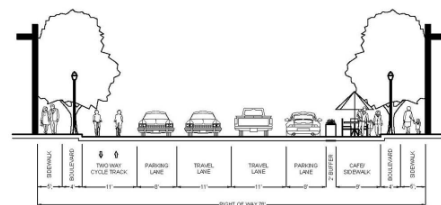
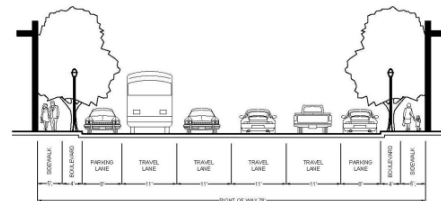
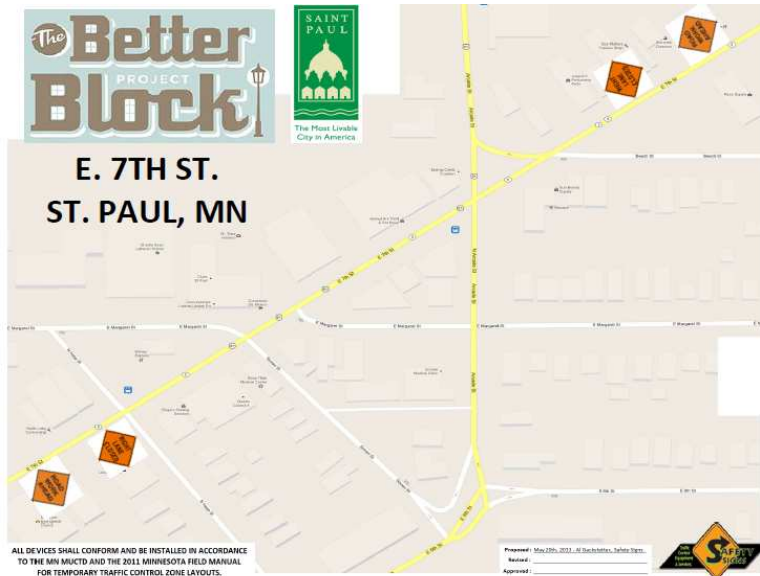

## Appendix D Concept Plan







## Build A Better Block Guide



### Appendix D Traffic Control Plan



## Build A Better Block Guide

### Appendix E Performance Measures

#### SAFETY:

METRIC	BEFORE	DURING
SPEED		
BUFFERING		
CROSSING DISTANCE		

#### COMFORT:

METRIC	BEFORE	DURING
DECIBAL LEVEL		
# SEATS		
TIME LINGERING		

#### STAY POWER:

METRIC	BEFORE	DURING
RETAIL SALES		
USER EXPERIENCE		
PROPERTY OWNER EXPERIENCE		



### Appendix F Follow Up Surveys

#### Survey for Volunteers

1. How did you FIRST learn about volunteer opportunities for the Better Block? SELECT ONE.
  - a. Team Better Block Website
  - b. Another organization or group. Please provide name
  - c. Personal (family, friend, Neighbor)
  - d. Personal experience with Team Better Block
  - e. TV, Newspaper or radio Please provide name
2. For what areas did you volunteer/donate?
3. Were you given adequate information and training for the Better Block?
  - a. yes
  - b. no
  - c. A little, but not all I needed
4. Tell us about your volunteer experience?
  - a. Did you feel the effectiveness of your participation was?
    - i. helpful and necessary
    - ii. somewhat helpful but not necessary
    - iii. not helpful
  - b. Ease of volunteer process
    - i. clear and simple
    - ii. too complicated
    - iii. manageable
  - c. Was the number of volunteers
    - i. Too many
    - ii. Too few
    - iii. Adequate
5. Would you volunteer for another Better Block?
  - a. Definitely will
  - b. Probably will
  - c. undecided
  - d. Probably will not why?
  - e. Definitely will not why?





## Build A Better Block Guide

### Survey for Participants

1. How did you FIRST learn about participating in the Better Block? SELECT ONE.
  - a. Team Better Block Website
  - b. Another organization or group. Please provide name
  - c. Personal (family, friend, Neighbor)
  - d. Another organization or group. Please provide name
  - e. Personal (family, friend, Neighbor)
  - f. Personal experience with Team Better Block
  - g. TV, Newspaper or radio Please provide name
  - h. City Staff
2. What area did you participate in?
3. Which day did you participate?
  - a. Friday
  - b. Saturday
  - c. Both Friday and Saturday
4. If you were a vendor please tell us how much revenue you generated?
5. Was this above or below your expectations?
6. Would you participate in a Better Block Project again?
  - a. Why or why not?
7. Were you given adequate information for the Better Block?
  - f. yes
  - g. no
  - h. A little, but not all I needed
8. What was your overall impression of the Better Block?
  - a. excellent
  - b. good
  - c. no opinion
  - d. needs some work
  - e. not good at all
9. What could have been done to improve the Better Block?
10. Of the demonstrations, which would you like to see more of on the Plaza?
  - a. seating
  - b. shade
  - c. plantings
  - d. Street NARROWING
  - e. Activities
  - f. Bicycle lanes
  - g. Angle Parking

11. If you could recommend one physical change for the area what would it be?

### Survey for Attendees



## Build A Better Block Guide

12. How did you FIRST learn about the Better Block? SELECT ONE.
- Team Better Block Website
  - Another organization or group. Please provide name
  - Personal (family, friend, Neighbor)
  - Personal experience with Team Better Block
  - Flyer
  - Facebook
  - TV, Newspaper or radio Please provide name
  - Other? Please explain.
13. Did you attend the Better Block?
- yes
  - no
14. Which day did you attend?
- Friday
  - Saturday
  - Both Friday and Saturday
15. Of the demonstrations, which would you like to see more of on the Plaza?
- seating
  - shade
  - plantings
  - Street narrowing
  - Activities
  - Bicycle lanes
  - Angle parking
16. If you could recommend one physical change for the area what would it be?
17. What was your overall impression of the Alamo Plaza Better Block?
- excellent
  - good
  - no opinion
  - needs some work
  - not good at all
18. What could have been done to improve the Better Block?